

## Freedom Summer: Mississippi's Own

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### Overview:

Students will appreciate the involvement of Mississippi's local activists in the Civil Rights Movement and the great risk students from northern cities took while participating in Freedom Summer. In short, the extraordinary strength and courage of ordinary people.

*Audience:* Grade Ten

### Objectives:

Students will review secondary sources that summarize the tremendous efforts of Freedom Summer organizers. They will then validate the conclusions drawn from these secondary sources by analyzing primary documents from the period.

### Documents:

**Primary Sources** – *Letters from Mississippi: Reports from Civil Rights Volunteers and Poetry of the 1964 Freedom Summer* (teacher or students can select letters)

**Secondary Sources**- *Overview of the 1964 Freedom Summer*. Wisconsin Historical Society. (2013, April 2). <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS3707>

### Procedure:

Day One - For homework, students will read a brief overview of Freedom Summer and answer accompanying comprehension questions about the general facts of the movement. [Article](#)

### Comprehension Questions:

1. What were the main objectives of the Freedom Summer project, and how did they aim to empower Black Mississippians politically?
2. How did the violence faced by participants during Freedom Summer impact national awareness of civil rights issues?
3. Who were some of the key figures involved in Freedom Summer, and what roles did they play in the movement?

Day Two - In class, students will participate in a short lecture on the movement where any questions will be answered and clarification provided. The teacher should confirm that students understand the goals of the movement.

Letters Jigsaw: Students will be placed into groups of four. Each student will read a letter from the Martinez source (independently/silently). Students will then share the perspective of their Freedom Summer volunteer and discuss experiences.

Specific letters for students from *Letters from Mississippi*:

- pg. 135-136; Jackson
- pg. 147-148; Ruleville
- pg. 166; Ruleville
- pg. 169-170, Ruleville
- pg. 185-186 Freedom Summer

As a class, we will discuss what we notice about the experiences of Freedom Summer volunteers and create a list of questions to ask if we could meet them in person.

Students will be assigned an excerpt to read from Bruce Watson's *Freedom Summer*. As they read this excerpt, they will consider the perspective of those who lived in the Delta and those who came from northern cities to help organize.

Day Four - As part of a "Do Now" assignment, students will review a short article on current voting trends in Mississippi (and/or the South). Students will engage in a Socratic Seminar where they will discuss their thoughts on the Watson piece. Students will discuss the tactics used in Freedom Summer and the impact it had on Mississippi. Our overarching question will be: How successful was Freedom Summer? What was achieved? What are we still hoping to gain in Mississippi?

Articles

[Mississippi Electoral Votes](#)

[Mississippi Voting](#)

[Voter Count Reports](#)

Reflection Question

What are three things that you notice about the data provided in the websites above?

Day 5-6 (*Optional*) - Students will visit the COFO Center at Jackson State University and listen to a mini-lecture from Dr. Robert Luckett on the significance of COFO/JSU/Tougaloo and young people to the movement. They will have time for questions and answers with him. Students will also visit the Two Museums of Mississippi and explore their Freedom Summer Exhibit. They will speak with Mr. H. Watkins and/or another museum educator about the role the young people in Jackson played in Freedom Summer/CRM.

Closure - Using the information gained from their primary and secondary sources, and conversations with experts, students will write a one-page reflection (MLA format) answering one of the following questions.

1. What role did Mississippians and Freedom Summer play in advancing political rights for African Americans?
2. What unique contributions did young people (15-25, black and white) make to the movement for political rights in Mississippi?
3. In what ways is Freedom Summer an ongoing project in Mississippi?